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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION:
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of
General Assembly resolution 48/176 of 21 December 1993

1. In its resolution 48/176 of 21 December 1993 entitled "Human settlements", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General:

(a) To ensure that the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) are kept under distinct and separate management and direction, in accordance with their specific mandates and activities;

(b) To give full consideration to the views expressed by Member States regarding the leadership of the Centre;

(c) To ensure that, in the restructuring of the United Nations system, the Centre is maintained as the global focal point for human settlements and that its institutional capabilities are strengthened at its headquarters, maximizing the effectiveness of national and regional operations.

2. The Secretary-General was also invited to report to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session on the implementation of the resolution, as well as on the progress made in preparations for the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

3. The present report is submitted pursuant to the above requests.

4. The Secretary-General has taken careful note of the views expressed by Member States on the matter. In particular, the Secretary-General fully shares the views of Member States concerning the important role of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat) in fostering the international community's development agenda in the area of human settlements. In this regard, he shares the concern to maintain, and indeed strengthen, the activities



and institutional identity of the Centre, in order, *inter alia*, to ensure adequate implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and related initiatives designed to arrest the deteriorating human settlements conditions in a great many parts of the world, and to ensure effective Secretariat support to the ongoing preparations for the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), convened for June 1996 in Istanbul, Turkey.

5. It is with the foregoing in mind, and consistent with the objectives sought by Member States, that the Secretary-General has taken a number of significant steps since the last session of the General Assembly to strengthen the Centre's management and leadership structure, as well as to preserve its institutional identity. Following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 48/176, the Secretary-General appointed, with effect from 15 February 1994, an Assistant Secretary-General who serves as the senior manager of Habitat and Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. The objective of this appointment was to assure effective management and leadership of the Centre as a distinct Programme, and to provide the necessary leadership for the preparatory work of the Conference. It will be recalled, in this connection, that the General Assembly, in its resolution 47/180 of 22 December 1992, called on the Centre to serve as substantive secretariat of the Conference.

6. During the period under consideration, the Centre has delivered a substantial work programme, including an important contribution to the implementation of chapter 7 (Sustainable human settlement development) of Agenda 21 ^{1/} (with respect to which UNCHS (Habitat) has been designated task manager), and the servicing of two sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), and has continued to execute successfully its substantive mandate relative to technical cooperation.

7. With respect to the preparations for the Conference, attention is drawn to the separate report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/49/272). As noted in that report, preparatory activities for the Conference are proceeding satisfactorily at both the intergovernmental and national levels, as well as within the secretariat.

8. At the intergovernmental level, a meeting of the Preparatory Committee took place at Geneva from 11 to 22 April 1994, at which the Committee began the preparatory process for the Conference, and identified, for preliminary exploration, the major issues expected to be addressed by it. The session, at the opening of which the Secretary-General delivered the keynote address, was well attended, not only by Government delegations but also by a wide cross-section of United Nations Programmes, agencies and organizations, other intergovernmental organizations, representatives of local governments, and non-governmental and private sector participants. The Preparatory Committee made notable progress in its substantive work, adopting a clear set of operational objectives for the Conference as well as a framework for preparatory activities to be undertaken at the local, national and international levels until 1996.

9. Substantial preparatory work has also been initiated at the secretariat level. Following the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, contacts were initiated with United Nations agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, professional associations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to prepare a programmatic diagram for all activities in preparation for the Conference. The diagram is accompanied by a series of briefs which provide a summary description of objectives, outputs, activities and required funding for the activities leading up to and to be undertaken during the Conference.

10. This secretariat "blueprint" for the Conference and its preparatory activities contains three important elements:

- (a) Core activities to be undertaken by the secretariat, including:
 - (i) Direct support to in-country preparation in a number of areas;
 - (ii) Development of substantive position papers on key Conference issues identified by the Preparatory Committee;
 - (iii) Preparation of substantive documentation for the preparatory process, including the draft Principles and Commitments and the Global Plan of Action to be adopted at the Conference;
- (b) Partnership activities to be undertaken by other United Nations Agencies, intergovernmental organizations and international associations on issues and themes related to the Conference. The aim here is to enrich the preparatory process with the experiences gained and lessons learnt from ongoing activities involving the international community at large;
- (c) Special programmes and awareness-building activities, to be sponsored or co-sponsored by public and private sector foundations and professional associations. These are intended to mobilize specific audiences through, inter alia, competitions and awards for best photographs, videos, press and media reporting on the cross-cutting issues and themes of the Conference, best urban designs and "best practices" in urban management.

11. Reports received by the secretariat also indicate progress in national preparations for the Conference. In accordance with the decisions of the Preparatory Committee, progress reports from national committees for the Conference are due by December 1994. Already, however, a large number of countries, both developed and developing, have communicated to the secretariat the start-up of their preparations for Habitat II. Complementing these national preparatory activities, a number of briefing missions to countries have been undertaken by the secretariat to stimulate, encourage and give advice on such preparations.

12. A significant development that also deserves notice in this context are the preparatory activities under way in Turkey, the host country of the Conference. These preparatory activities were launched at a major national event in July presided over by the President of the Republic of Turkey and attended by both

the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and the Secretary-General of the Conference.

13. The foregoing review confirms that substantial progress has been made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/176 and, in particular, that UNCHS (Habitat) continues to pursue actively and successfully its mandated activities, including the preparations for the Habitat II Conference.

14. In his report on the restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat in the economic and social sectors (A/49/336, paras. 164-170), the Secretary-General outlined the potential gain in efficiency and synergy that could be achieved through measures aimed at enhancing coherence in the management of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), while respecting fully the institutional and operational identity of these distinct Programmes. It is in this context that, in addition to strengthening substantive collaboration, proposals are being drawn up for the establishment of a common administrative and support service for the United Nations entities at Nairobi. Such a common service, which will be the subject of a separate submission to the General Assembly, would seek to strengthen the capacity of both UNEP and Habitat in the delivery of their mandated programmes of activities, while preserving fully their institutional and operational identities. The new common administrative and support services areas will result in the elimination of duplication and unnecessary fragmentation, particularly in areas such as staff services, conference services, finance, and other general support services, including contracts and procurement, travel, library and information facilities. The Secretary-General strongly believes that the establishment of such a unified administrative and support structure would not only enhance programme delivery at both UNEP and Habitat but would also greatly strengthen the United Nations presence in Kenya, and Africa as a whole.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I and Vol. I/Corr.1, Vol. II, Vol. III and Vol. III/Corr.1)) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: Resolutions adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex II.
